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Media Strategy vs. Content Strategy in Online Advertising: Exploring the Influence of Consumers' Goal-Directedness for Web Navigation

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59. Media Strategy vs. Content Strategy in Online Advertising: Exploring the Influence of Consumers' Goal-Directedness for Web Navigation

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Abstract
As the Internet grows rapidly, how online media can be best utilized for advertising purposes increases its importance. Based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this research incorporates consumers' goal-directedness for Web navigation as an important moderator influencing the success of online advertising strategies. Using the lab experiment approach, results of this research not only support the perspective of the ELM but also show how both advertising strategies (media/content) should be designed and implemented in accordance with consumers' goal-directedness for Web navigation to achieve maximum advertising effectiveness. Results of this research demonstrate the uniqueness of the online media and also remind future researchers of the importance of goal-directness for Web navigation and consumer involvement in the online advertising context.

Keywords: Goal-directedness, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Involvement, Media strategy, Content strategy

Introduction

As consumer information processing differs with various personal interests, knowledge, experience, and personality, consumer characteristics emerge as an important factor affecting advertising effectiveness. In past studies, such factor is often represented by consumer involvement (e.g., see (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Park & Young, 1982; Greenwald & Leavitt 1984; Celsi & Olson, 1988; Swinyard, 1993)). For example, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1983, 1984) is widely adopted for the purpose of explaining cognitive responses of consumers to promotional stimuli.

The ELM provides strong explanation and predictability in traditional marketing media. However, as traditional marketing media differ to a great extent in "interactivity" from their online counterparts (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Griffith et al., 2001; Rust & Lemon, 2001), further investigation of the ELM is needed for online consumer information processing behavior.

On the other hand, two facts need to be emphasized in the online world. First, since consumers may be either goal-directed or non-directed when entering the online environment, the information processing behavior also differs accordingly, as Hoffman and Novak point out for *goal-directed* and *experienced* online users (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Second, as the Internet gradually becomes tightly integrated into our daily life, it is obvious that its use may be either intended (e.g., looking for travel information) or unintended (e.g., killing time). When consumers hold various goals or purposes in the online environment, the importance of interactivity between consumers and the marketing media also changes.

This research thus aims at investigating whether consumers' goal-directedness for Web navigation is indeed an important factor affecting online advertising effectiveness and how it exerts its influence. Moreover, this research also compares two advertising strategies, the *media strategy* and the *content strategy* that are commonly utilized by advertisers, trying to gain a deeper understanding of the effective implementation of online ad campaigns.

This remaining of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the related literature. Section 3 explains the research model and the research hypotheses, followed by a discussion on the research methodology and the experimental design in Section 4. Section 5 presents the data analysis and Section 6 discusses the findings. Implications, suggested directions for future research, and research limitations are addressed in Section 7.

Literature Review

The ELM

The extent of elaboration to which one thinks about issue-relevant information spreads along a continuum stretching from no thought of the issue-relevant information, to complete and thorough elaborations of all relevant cues and integration of those elaborations into one's attitude schema. The elaboration continuum can be further simplified into two extremes, namely the central route and the peripheral route of information processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1983; 1984; 1986). The former occurs when a consumer has relatively higher capability and motivation to carefully scrutinize all issue-relevant arguments or cues (e.g., price or spec comparison). In contrast, when capability and/or motivation are low, the latter will be followed. The moderating view of involvement based on the ELM offers an important basis in consumer research and therefore acts as an important foundation for this research.

Advertising Strategy – Media Strategy and Content Strategy

Ad Variation as the Media Strategy

The media strategy utilizes specialties of the media as major elements for advertising. One of the possible implementations of the media strategy is ad variations because variations in ad presentation are especially important in attracting eyeballs in such information-rich media as the Web. Although ad repetition improves consumers' perception by eliminating tedium, over-exposure to ad repetition might cause negative consequences. As ad exposure continues, consumers' perception or evaluation of the ad degrades accordingly, forming a ∩-shaped curve (Calder and Sternthal, 1980; Rethans et al., 1986; Kirmani, 1997). Variation is therefore added in the hope to eliminate such wearout effects.

Schumann et al.'s (1990) Repetition-Variation Hypothesis shows how product relevance moderates between substantive and cosmetic ad variations. Schumann et al.'s results are consistent with the ELM and also illustrate the conditions under which variation strategies are most effective. According to the Repetition-Variation Hypothesis, cosmetic variation has greater impact on consumer attitudes when motivation to process ad information is lower, but when consumer motivation is higher, substantive variation is more effective.

Message Appeal as the Content Strategy

In contrast to the media strategy, the content strategy focuses on the ad content itself. All ads, based on the major message appeal incorporated, can be positioned on a continuum anchored by "informational appeal" and "emotional appeal." Consumers tend to make inferences about the degree of rationality or emotionality when exposed to ad messages (Zeitlin & Westwood, 1986); hence, ad message appeals should be consistent with product characteristics for better

advertising effectiveness (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Liebermann and Flint-Goor (1996) also point out that ad message appeals should be designed in accordance with the advertised subject in order to be persuasive.

Many studies such as those mentioned above focus on selecting proper message appeals to make ads most effective. Yet, whether and how message appeals should be designed according to individual information processing preferences and motivations in the online environment seem to be neglected by most researchers and thus is one of the issues to be addressed in this research.

Goal-Directedness of Online Information Processing

Consumer information processing behavior in the online environment can be referred to as either goal-directed or experiential (non-directed) (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Simply put, compared to those with experiential behavior, goal-directed consumers have a clear and structured goal hierarchy in mind and thus perform purposive and selective information processing. In contrast, experiential consumers usually perform unintentional surfing instead. Janiszewski (1998) points out the difference between goal-directed and exploratory search behavior. The former usually occurs when consumers are more motivated, and a search routine stored in memory or generated for the current task will be followed. The latter, however, occurs when consumers are less motivated or lack necessary experiences or knowledge and is a moment-by-moment activity such as browsing in an online shopping mall to kill time or for relaxation purposes. Biehal and Chakravarti (1983) even point out that information acquired through goal-directed navigation causes higher memory accessibility than that acquired through experiential navigation.

As consumers with various goals focus differently during the search process (Blich et al., 1986; Rubin and Perse, 1987; Ramaswami et al., 2000), the role played by consumers' goal-directedness for Web navigation in the online advertising context is worth deeper investigation. More detailed discussion on this topic will be discussed in Section 3.

Attitude toward Advertisement (Aad)

Aad is a "predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure situation" (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Four alternative specifications of the mediating role of Aad were proposed (Lutz et al., 1983) for its influence on purchasing intention. Among the four specifications proposed, the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH) gains more support from past studies (Lutz et al., 1983; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Homer, 1990; Miniard et al., 1990; Brown and Stayman, 1992). Further, according to the DMH, consumer reactions to the source of the message (i.e., the ad) influence Aad, and Aad as a mediator further determines both the cognitive and affective responses of consumer to the message content.

In fact, stimuli of ads come not only from product attributes but also from the ad itself (Scott et al., 1990) and the context where the ad is presented. That is, the formation of Aad is not solely determined by product or brand attributes; affections or reactions aroused during the ad exposure may also be important factors influencing Aad.

Hypotheses Development

Involvement and Ad Variation

Based on the ELM, whether the central or peripheral route is more effective depends on consumer involvement on the advertised product: positive persuasion can be expected by

providing more involved consumers with central cues and less involved consumers with peripheral cues.

Considering the implementation and presentation styles, the substantive and cosmetic variations of Schumann et al. (1990) correspond to the central and peripheral cues of the ELM. As high-involvement consumers hold greater motivation and capability to process and judge ad message contents, providing substantive variation in ads can help consumers form purchase decisions by satisfying their information processing needs. In contrast, low-involvement consumers tend to be affected by the ad context, comprising of components like celebrity endorsers or background music (Petty et al., 1983; Park & Young, 1986; Singh and Dalal, 1999), hence cosmetic variation will be more suitable. That is, better ad effects can be expected if the design of the ad presentation context matches the information processing characteristics of consumers (Schumann et al., 1990; Haugtvedt et al., 1994). Hence, H1 is proposed as follows:

H1: Consumer involvement moderates the relationship between ad variation and ad effect:

(1) Substantive ad variations will be more effective for high-involvement consumers;

(2) Cosmetic ad variations will be more effective for low-involvement consumers.

Involvement and Message Appeal

Informational appeals emphasize "factual details" such as product specifications, prices, or numeric figures, while emotional appeals try to link the purchasing decision with potential buyers' psychological requirements (Liebermann & Flint-Goor, 1996). Note that the comparison between these two is not a dichotomy that one outperforms the other. Rather, whether one is more preferable than the other depends on the advertising context (Goldberg & Gorn, 1987; Cutler and Javalgi,1993; Stafford and Day, 1995; Liebermann & Flint-Goor, 1996).

Based on the ELM, high-involvement consumers exert higher elaboration likelihood and tend to follow the central route, allocating more cognitive resources to search, compare, and analyze related information. On the contrary, low-involvement consumers who hold lower motivation and less capability to process advertising information allocate fewer cognitive resources during the process.

Therefore, for high-involvement consumers, higher advertising effectiveness can be expected if informational messages appeals are provided. This is because informational appeals, as opposed to emotional appeals, satisfy their information processing needs. As for low-involvement consumers, since peripheral cues weigh more in the decision process, emotional appeals should generate better responses. We thus develop H2 as follows:

H2: Consumer involvement moderates the relationship between message appeal and ad effect:

(1) Informational appeals will be more effective for high-involvement consumers;

(2) Emotional appeals will be more effective for low-involvement consumers.

Goal-Directedness for Web Navigation

According to Janiszewski (1998), goal-directed search occurs when consumers are motivated to use a stored search routine for more efficient information processing. In contrast, for non-directed consumers, "activities are not guided by goals or outcomes, but by the process itself" (Bloch et al., 1986, p. 21), and search choices are usually intuitive and spontaneous (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Rubin and Perse (1987) also state that goal-directed information processing is intentional and selective, indicating purposive exposure to specific content. In comparison, non-directed information processing is less intentional and non-selective, and the focus is on media rather than content as it is often a time-filling activity associated with diverse motives. Applying this viewpoint to the online environment, the content can be seen as information or messages provided by web pages or ads, and the media is equivalent to the interactivity of the Web and the multimedia information presentation such as ad variation.

Hence, guided by a certain goal set beforehand, goal-directed consumers tend to pay more cognitive resources to message contents such as price information or slogans in the banners in the Web environment. For non-directed consumers, as there is no specific mission to be accomplished, entertainment and recreation are more important for time-killing purposes, thus emphasizing the interactivity of the Web for ad presentation.

Further, for both goal-directed and non-directed consumers, the ELM should still apply as long as the ad presentation matches the information processing styles of consumers. Accordingly, the central and peripheral routes will be followed and preferred by high-involvement and low-involvement consumers, respectively. Based on the discussion above, H3 is therefore proposed below:

H3: For consumers with different goal-directedness for Web navigation, the effectiveness of message appeal and ad variation in online advertising also differ:

(1) Message appeals designed in accordance with consumers' product involvement will be more effective for goal-directed consumers than for non-directed consumers.

(2) Ad variations designed in accordance with consumers' product involvement will be more effective for non-directed consumers than for goal-directed consumers.

Research Methodology

Construct Definition

Involvement. The definition of involvement is based on Zaichkowsky (1985), and we define the "object" as the advertised product (TV game console), and use the revised Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) of Zaichkowsky (1994) as the instrument. To avoid participants from being primed by exposure to measurement items in the PII, not only TV game consoles but also travel booklets and online flower stores are included so that participants will have no idea what the real purpose of the measurement is. For each subject, involvement on TV game consoles is computed as the sum of the ten items in PII ($\alpha = 0.9475$).

Media Strategy. As mentioned above, media strategy is implemented in the form of ad variation and the two variation strategies are implemented according to Schumann et al. (1990). Dynamic GIF images are used to implement these variation strategies.

Content Strategy. The content strategy is implemented in the form of message appeal. Informational appeal is designed to present specific product attributes so that consumers can make comparisons or form purchase decisions based on these factual and objective details (Laskey et al., 1989; Stafford and Day, 1995; Liebermann & Flint-Goor, 1996). Emotional appeal includes more subjective elements such as the image of happiness, family, or safety in order to cause positive affections psychologically (Laskey et al., 1989; Stafford and Day, 1995; Liebermann & Flint-Goor, 1996).

Goal-directedness for Web navigation. Goal-directedness for Web navigation refers to whether consumers are goal-directed or not. Guided by the instructor of the experiment, subjects are instructed either to browse the web pages in ways they usually do (i.e. non-directed group) or to pay extra attention to banners in the web pages during browsing (i.e. goal-directed group).

Attitude toward Advertisement (Aad). Aad is operationalized according to Yi (1990) and Coulter and Punj (1999). Semantic difference items with five-point Likert scale are used. Aad is computed as the sum of these five items ($\alpha = 0.8276$).

Research Design

Pretest

To ensure a proper experiment design, two stages are included in the pretest. In the first stage, the aim is to select a proper product (TV game console) as the advertising product. In the second stage 10 slogans out of 20 were selected to best represent informational and emotional appeals.

Experiment

Participants are randomly allocated into two groups. According to the group assigned, they are instructed to either follow their usual browsing habits or pay special attention to banners "for there might be information needed." The former group stands for non-directed consumers and the latter for goal-directed consumers. It is to be noted that all subjects are presented with the same web pages to ensure consistency. Three additional banners for online flower stores, mutual funds, and travel information are also used in the web pages together with that for TV game consoles to eliminate extraneous contaminations due to curiosity, guessing, or priming.

Participants are requested to fill in a questionnaire after browsing all web pages. Other than measurement items required for this research, filler items for web pages and additional banners are also included in the questionnaire. However, responses to these filler items are excluded from the data analysis stage. After all steps are completed, subjects are given a souvenir with gratitude from the researcher.

Data Analysis

Participant Profile

A total of 208 participants participate in the experiment, including 108 males and 100 females. Since participants are mostly students, the ages range mainly from 19 to 24 years old. Of the 208 participants, over 60% have Internet experiences of over 4 years, and only less than 1% report to have experiences of less than 6 months. When being asked how often they access the Web, 87% do so more than once daily, and over 50% spend 7 to 9 hours on the Net every week, indicating that most participants of the experiment are experienced Web browsers.

With respect to playing TV games, over 70% of the participants have experiences of more than six months. Also note that 53.8% of the participants are high-involvement consumers on TV game consoles and 46.2% are low-involvement consumers. The fact that the percentage of high-involvement consumers is similar to that of low-involvement consumers also justifies the necessity of product selection in the pretest.

Convergent and Discriminant Validity Assessment

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and inter-item correlation analysis are used for the assessment of convergent and discriminant validity in this research. VARIMAX is used for the rotation in EFA, and only factors with eigenvalues larger than 1 are extracted. EFA results show that all items converge under corresponding factors and two distinct factors,

Involvement and Aad, are clearly identified. Such pattern supports the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures.

Inter-item correlation matrix (see Table 1) also shows that all intra-construct item correlations are statistically significant ($p<0.01$) and that all intra-construct items correlations are higher than inter-construct item correlations. This again supports the convergent and discriminant validity of this research (Farhoomand & Drury, 1996). Due to space limitation, detailed results for EFA and the inter-item correlation matrix is available on request to the first author of this paper.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix for Measurement Items

	INV1	INV2	INV3	INV4	INV5	INV6	INV7	INV8	INV9	INV10	AAD1	AAD2	AAD3	AAD4	AAD5
INV2	0.694***														
INV3	0.807***	0.616***													
INV4	0.669***	0.742***	0.648***												
INV5	0.753***	0.644***	0.740***	0.560***											
INV6	0.672***	0.759***	0.627***	0.825***	0.582***										
INV7	0.693***	0.657***	0.651***	0.681***	0.595***	0.746***									
INV8	0.573***	0.570***	0.582***	0.531***	0.715***	0.546***	0.557***								
INV9	0.653***	0.545***	0.693***	0.473***	0.717***	0.536***	0.567***	0.621***							
INV10	0.743***	0.601***	0.708***	0.572***	0.679***	0.561***	0.605***	0.593***	0.702***						
AAD1	0.154**	0.197***	0.069	0.191***	0.202***	0.186***	0.133*	0.120*	0.085	0.161**					
AAD2	0.172**	0.206***	0.171**	0.178***	0.219***	0.178***	0.117*	0.129*	0.155**	0.158**	0.586***				
AAD3	0.168**	0.247***	0.104	0.208***	0.195***	0.234***	0.111	0.151**	0.134*	0.193***	0.648***	0.670***			
AAD4	0.231***	0.214***	0.169**	0.181***	0.251***	0.195***	0.222***	0.185***	0.085	0.174**	0.389***	0.329***	0.418***		
AAD5	0.163**	0.143**	0.114*	0.162**	0.157**	0.164**	0.135*	0.152**	0.071	0.145**	0.422***	0.449***	0.538***	0.555***	
Mean	2.779	3.486	2.971	3.587	2.736	3.601	3.260	2.995	2.606	2.865	3.466	3.356	3.414	3.721	3.784
Std Dev.	1.278	1.163	1.274	1.051	1.160	1.146	1.326	1.140	1.158	1.200	0.651	0.867	0.744	0.839	0.720

(*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01, N=208)

In the analyses that follow, the scores of the constructs are computed as the sum of their corresponding measurement items. The correlation between the summed factor scores of Involvement and Aad is 0.259 ($p<0.01$). The mean of Involvement is 30.885, which is very close to the midpoint using revised PII. This shows that the participants are not highly involved or low involved in general.

Results

Interactions of Ad Variation × Involvement and Message Appeal × Involvement

The ANOVA results show the existence of interaction between advertising strategies and consumers' product involvement on TV game consoles. For the media strategy, the Ad Variation × Involvement interaction ($F=2.745$, $p<0.1$) reveals that product involvement has a significant impact on Aad under substantive variation ($t=-3.497$, $p<0.002$; one-tailed test) but not under cosmetic variation ($t=-0.974$; one-tailed test). For the content strategy, the Message Appeal × Involvement interaction ($F=4.845$, $p<0.03$) reveals that product involvement has a significant impact on Aad under informative appeal ($t=-4.001$, $p<0.001$; one-tailed test) but not under emotional appeal ($t=-0.673$; one-tailed test). On the other hand, Message Appeal has a significant impact on Aad under high involvement ($t=1.822$, $p<0.08$; one-tailed test) in contrast to low involvement ($t=-1.310$; one-tailed test). The means and standard deviations of the treatment groups are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Effects of Ad Variation, Message Appeal, and Involvement on Aad

		Substantive Variation	Cosmetic Variation	Informational Appeal	Emotional Appeal
Low Involvement	n	54	42	47	49
	Aad	16.76 (2.57)	17.45 (3.07)	16.68 (2.70)	17.43 (2.89)
High Involvement	n	50	62	55	57
	Aad	18.68 (3.03)	18.03 (2.91)	18.84 (2.73)	17.82 (2.31)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Interactions of Goal-directedness for Web Navigation × Advertising Strategy × Involvement

When consumers are motivated by different purposes of accessing the Web, subsequent information processing and perception to ad messages also differ. This is also the background on which H3 is based.

The results show that for non-directed consumers, the Ad Variation × Involvement interaction ($F=4.077$, $p<0.05$) is more significant than the Message Appeal × Involvement interaction ($F=0.963$), suggesting that the media strategy (ad variation) is more persuasive than the content strategy (message appeal) for non-directed consumers. This is because for non-directed consumers, interaction with media presentation is emphasized during Web navigation. Further analysis also reveals that for non-directed consumers, product involvement has a significant impact on Aad under substantive variation ($t=-2.308$, $p<0.03$; one-tailed test) but not under cosmetic variation ($t=-0.704$; one-tailed test).

In contrast, for goal-directed consumers, it turns out that while the impact of the Message Appeal × Involvement interaction on Aad is statistically significant ($F=4.031$, $p<0.05$), the Ad Variation × Involvement interaction is not ($F=0.213$). It is also found that for goal-directed consumers, product involvement has a significant impact on Aad under informational appeal ($t=-4.257$, $p<0.001$; one-tailed test) but not under emotional appeal ($t=-1.050$; one-tailed test). These results show that when goal-directed users are the primary audiences of online ads, not only consumers' product involvement but also the content itself should be taken into account for making effective online ads. That is, content-oriented advertising strategies designed in accordance with consumers' product involvement will be more effective for goal-directed consumers than for non-directed consumers. Table 3 reports the mean and standard deviations of the treatment groups.

Table 3. Effects of Ad Variation, Message Appeal, Involvement, and Goal-directedness for Web Navigation on Aad

		Non-directed Consumers		Goal-directed Consumers	
		Substantive Variation	Cosmetic Variation	Substantive Variation	Cosmetic Variation
Low Involvement	n	25	16	29	26
	Aad	16.6 (2.58)	17.88 (2.94)	16.90 (2.60)	17.19 (3.18)
High Involvement	n	27	35	23	27
	Aad	18.19 (2.37)	17.29 (2.70)	19.26 (3.62)	19.00 (2.94)
		Non-directed Consumers		Goal-directed Consumers	
		Informational Appeal	Emotional Appeal	Informational Appeal	Emotional Appeal
Low Involvement	n	21	20	26	29
	Aad	16.95 (2.87)	17.25 (2.71)	16.46 (2.58)	17.55 (3.04)
High Involvement	n	30	32	25	25
	Aad	18.07 (2.30)	17.31 (2.80)	19.76 (2.95)	18.48 (3.45)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

As indicated by the results presented above, H1 and H2 are shown to be partially supported. Substantive ad variations and informational appeals are found to be more effective for high-involvement consumers. Results also support H3 by demonstrating that the design of message appeal for goal-directed consumers and ad variation for non-directed consumers are more effective, respectively.

Discussion

Moderating Effects of Involvement

Results of this research show that consumer involvement acts as a moderator, affecting when the content strategy or the media strategy is appropriate and effective. Support for H1 and H2 further evidences the applicability of the ELM in the online environment, emphasizing the role of involvement as a moderator affecting whether and which advertising strategy works.
In other words, as the Internet gradually becomes one of the major media in the modern society, whether traditional marketing perspectives like the ELM can be properly applied in this new media therefore becomes an important issue. The results supporting H1 and H2 thus provide a positive evidence for this question.

Moderating Effects of Goal-directedness for Web Navigation

Support from this research for the moderating effects of goal-directedness in Web navigation can also be viewed as both an examination of and extension to the ELM. This research not only provides supportive evidences to MacInnis and Jaworski (1989) but also points out the influence of goal-directedness for Web navigation on online ad information processing. The support for H3 helps in selecting and designing advertising strategies emphasizing either media richness or message content, depending on the primary type of the Web site visitors or customers.

As shown by this research, the media strategy and the content strategy focus on ad presentation and ad message contents, respectively. The rationale behind the contingency view is the tendency that consumers tend to automatically activate the screening mechanism during exposure to ads in the online environment. Advertising effectiveness is likely to be diluted if the screening mechanism is ignored. Taking goal-directedness for Web navigation into account helps understanding when and how the screening mechanism is activated and how it works, therefore helping advertisers in implementing better advertising strategies. On the other hand, the results also enrich the view of Hoffman and Novak (1996) regarding online browsing behavior.

Conclusion

Compared with traditional media, the online environment makes the media more than the sources of information communication—it also forms an interactive community. As indicated by this research, if advertising strategies (content/media) can be employed along with central or peripheral cues in accordance with consumer characteristics such as product involvement, higher advertising effectiveness can be expected. To achieve this goal, consumers' goal-directedness for Web navigation plays an important role as its moderating role determines when the media or the content strategy will be more influential to further intensify consumers' brand or product image.

It is therefore suggested that to implement effective personalized advertising in the online environment (e.g., (Bhatnagar & Papatla, 2001; Kim et al., 2001)), besides the frequently mentioned factors like age, gender, or past order history, goal-directedness for Web navigation is also an equally important attribute that should not be ignored. As shown by this research, goal-dependent marketing provides flexibility which is absent or weak in simple marketing activities.

An example can be given here as an illustration. Obviously, most visitors to a car Web site come for the purpose of obtaining related news and information, making their visits more like goal-directed navigation. In this case, the content strategy should be utilized because most visitors are motivated to a certain degree to receive and process car-related information

(whether from Web pages or from ads) and more cognitive resources will be allocated for this purpose. In contrast, for sites built for entertainment purposes, the media strategy should be chosen instead. Ignorance or negative feelings might arise if the content strategy is mistakenly chosen, as most visitors to such kind of Web sites are non-directed consumers who surf around to kill time or to get relaxed.

For future research suggestions, it is suggested to investigate how product type, a controlled factor in this research, influences advertising effectiveness and whether it acts as a moderator like goal-directedness for Web navigation examined in this research. Similarly, to truly reflect the real situation of online advertising, other forms of online ads are also suggested for future research. Lastly, as all Web sites have various positioning, whether the media strategy or the content strategy should be executed is highly related to the target communities of a site and worths further investigation.

Research limitations should be noted. First, this study focuses on banner ads only; hence the limitation on the generalizability of the results should be noted. Second, the "artificially-manipulated" goal-directedness is due to the fact that real goal-directedness is difficult to be operationalized in the experiment context and future research is also advised to work on this point. Lastly, the flaw of "self-selection" is unavoidable for experiments where participants are acquired through a recruiting process. This research however tries to minimize this potential problem by randomly assigning the participants into each group at the time of their registration.

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